

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE,  
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CONSERVATION CENTRE,  
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17. SOME NOTES ON GHARIAL [*GAVIALIS GANGETICUS*  
(GMELIN)] IN CAPTIVITY  
(With a plate)

In view of the very limited information available regarding the food and habits of the Gharial [*Gavialis gangeticus* (Gmelin)] the following notes on captive specimens in Nandankanan Biological Park, Orissa, may be of interest.

Since 1963, sixteen baby gharials have been received, 1 in March, 2 each in June, July and October, and 3 each in August, September and November. All were accidentally captured in fishing nets in the river during floods.

At present three gharials (1♂ 2.56 metres; 2♀ 2.45 and 2.48 metres) and two crocodiles [*C. palustris* Lesson (one 3 metre and the other 2 metre)] are kept together in an artificial cement tank of water with irregular sides, of an area of about 750 square feet and a depth of about 3½ feet. The shore is sandy in places and covered with laterite stones in others. The water is changed two or three times every month.

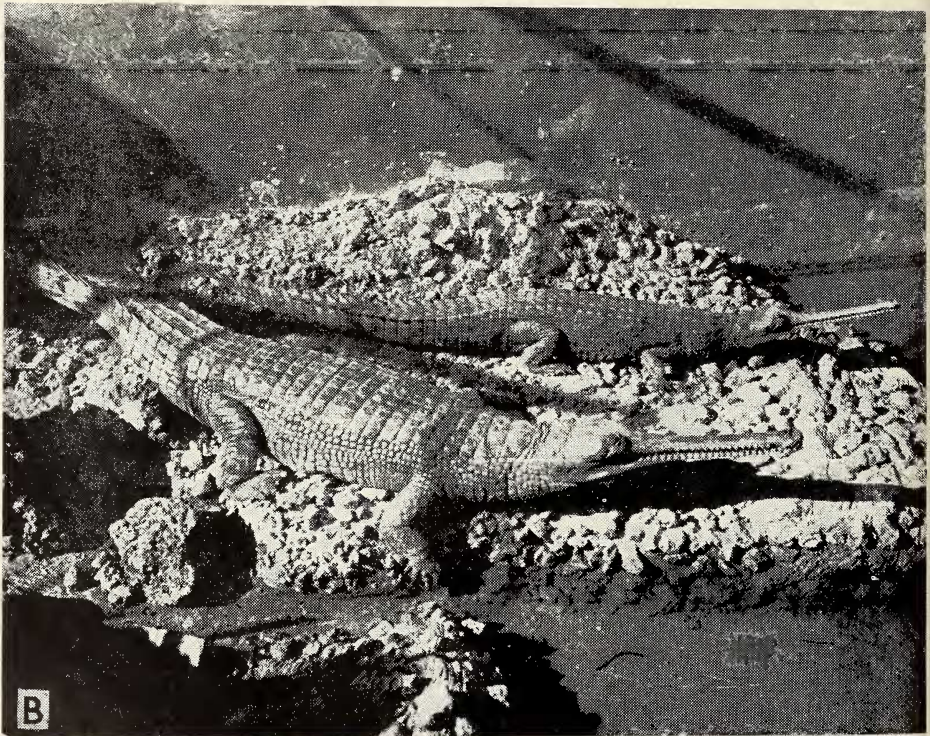
About 20 kgs of live fish, mostly *Channa gachua* (Ham.), *Channa marulius* (Ham.), *Channa punctatus* (Bloch), *Channa striatus* (Bloch), *Heteropneustes fossilis* (Bloch), *Clarias batrachus* (Linn.) *Notopterus notopterus* (Pallas), are dropped into the pond once a week, usually in the evening. The replenishment is guided by the number left and determined at the time of clearing the tank. The surviving fish suggest that *Heteropneustes fossilis* and *Anabas testudineus* are least favoured. Generally dead fish are ignored.

Once the bigger crocodile jumped out of water and caught a monkey sitting on a branch overhanging the tank.

The gharial catches a swimming fish across the middle, raises its entire snout above the surface of the water and then with 2 or 3 snaps turns the fish, bringing it deeper into the mouth and gulps its head first. These jerks of floating gharial often synchronise with a similar movement of the tail outside the water. Fish fingerlings were fed to the gharials when first received and the size increased in proportion with the growth of the gharials.

A baby gharial weighing about 600 gm and measuring about 70 cm





A. Two gharials are just coming out of water. The black bars on the body are clearly visible.

B. Same gharials are returning to water after staying sometime on the land. The black bars on the body have almost disappeared.